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AUTHOR Meussling, Vonne
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ABSTRACT

Teaching interpersonal values in an "ideal" setting, such as a college classroom, differs greatly from teaching in a "real" setting, in this case a maximum security prison for males. The practice of prison indoctrination dehumanizes inmates, diminishes their self-esteem, and deprives them of positive role models. The nature of the collective prison psyche in a setting where physical and sexual abuses are a part of daily existence, makes meaningful human relationships virtually impossible. Fear of being killed, the loss of contact with valued others, and the risks involved in trusting either guards or fellow inmates reduce prison life to a continuing ordeal of intense loneliness. All of these aspects of prison life tend to minimize an individual's chances for successful reentry into normal society. A class in interpersonal communication brought a nonevaluative, nonhostile nook into a forbidding world and was therapeutic and restorative to the inmates who participated in it. The classroom, like a small society within a dreary subculture, enabled the inmate-students to develop a modicum of trust. The willingness of the inmates to expose their innermost thoughts in journals and their consistency in attending class suggests that the class fulfilled not only an academic but also an emotional need. (Excerpts from inmate journals are included throughtout the paper.) (FL)

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THE IDEAL AND THE REALITY
TEACHING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE WALLS

Vonne Meussling, Ph.D.
Department of Communication
Indiana State University
Terre Haute, IN 47809
812-232-6311 Ex. 2433

Paper Presented at the
Central States Speech Association
Chicago, Illinois
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THE IDEAL AND THE REALITY
TEACHING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE WALLS

Vonne Meussling
Department of Communication
Indiana State University

Communication researchers have yet to document the success of interpersonal communication training in a hazardous environment where such training is vital to the individual's well being and even survival. For approximately two decades, educators have been developing curricula that incorporate interpersonal communication processes in the college classroom. It might be fair to assume that the college classroom in a free society would be the "ideal" environment in which to apply the theoretical concepts for developing self-awareness, enhancing self-concept and practicing personal openness, spontaneity, self-disclosure, warmth and trust. The literature indicates that the application of interpersonal values will help create a better human environment. The interpersonal process assumes that socialization, including communication with others, aids the individual in self-identification.

The purpose of this paper is to contrast the teaching and application of interpersonal values in an "ideal" setting with their teaching in a "real" setting as found inside the walls of a maximum security prison for males.[1] It further demonstrates that the complexity of the environmental factors in such a prison may, in fact, inhibit the inmate's re-entry to society. The study will examine the inmate response to peer pressure and correctional officers, as well as his isolation, anger, and well-grounded survival fears. It will also present perception of himself and his environment through personal journal entries which the student-authors have made available.

Correction education historically has been designed to bring a positive change in the attitude and behavior of those incarcerated. Behavioral experts and correctional clientele are aware of the difficulty of changing an individual's concepts while his environment remains unchanged. Others who help to form part of the individual's environment are important because self-esteem seems to be centered within the individual's reference group, whether that reference group consists of convicts, university professors, or plumbers.

Salaman maintains that the individual seeks identification with his reference group regardless of positive or negative feedback.[2]

> This identity has importance either because it is one that they value . . . or because it is one that is highly pervasive and difficult to get away from. Usually it is simply something that stems . . . from their participation in a particular way of life with particular associates.

Becker indicates that individuals who have shared a common fate or who have been in the same experiential field have a stronger bond with each other than with others not sharing the experience:

> Members of organized deviance groups have one thing in common: their deviance. It gives them a sense of common fate, or being in the same boat. From a sense of common fate, from having to face the same problems, grows a deviant subculture: a set of perspectives and understandings about what the world is like and how to deal with it. . . .[3]

Park also notes that:

> The conceptions which men form of themselves seem to depend . ... upon the role which they seek to play in the communities and social groups in which they live, as well as the recognition and status which society accords them in their roles.[4]

Thus the prison experience tends to shape the individual's self-concept in a particular way and helps to bind him in a strong fashion with others who share the prison experience.

Much of the research and documentation in correctional education has centered on remedial education for these educationally deprived individuals.

> It is estimated that approximately 15 to 30 percent of incarcerated adults do not meet community adult basic literacy standards (8th grade education) and that a vast majority lack marketable skills . . . many lack interpersonal as well as life coping skills.[5]

Many treatment programs have been implemented. Vocational technical training has been available to inmates since the early nineteenth century. Reports of the census of State Correctional Facilities indicate remedial education has been provided by ninety-two percent of the prisons. Eighty-two percent of state institutions offer group-counseling programs and individual-counseling services.[6] Fogel reports that the "therapeutic community," which uses such techniques as milieu treatment, reality therapy and encounter groups, is employed widely to modify group attitudes.[7] Criminal behavior modification experts have used various forms of medical treatment, such as psychosurgery, plastic surgery, chemotherapy and electric shock treatments.[8] The effect of these programs, however, is uncertain. No data is available even on the number of inmates who have participated in these programs.

This article focuses on the value of teaching interpersonal communication in a prison environment. At this time it would be too ambitious in scope to imply that teaching interpersonal values in the limited confines of the classroom could accomplish more than a step toward attitudinal change, but even that

step would be a positive beginning.

The experience within the walls of the prison will be reconstructed in an interpersonal manner as I want to recall with absolute precision my perception of the antithesis of the classroom "ideal" as represented by the prison "reality."

Entering The Subculture

Driving south on route 63 just eight miles beyond Terre Haute, Indiana, my eyes beheld a commanding sign which bore the words United States Penitentiary. The countryside surrounding the sign was isolated, but in a distant field I saw what appeared to be a huge, solid fortress with high brick walls and windows barred with steel. Old and indestructable looking, it seemed to be an abandoned fort, one that might well be used, perhaps, as a warehouse. The surrounding buildings, the private water tower and the steaming smoke stack, suggested, however, that it was not abandoned. Here was some kind of community in the midst of, but separated from the rest of society. At the end of the approach drive, the tall tower manned by an armed guard at the single barred-gate entrance, suggested that no one entered or departed here without permission. As I left the highway and started down the long drive, I drove more slowly; approaching those walls, I felt eyes watching me. Presently I came to a sign that directed: "All vehicles stop and identify yourself." I halted beside a green, steel box; a voice, cold with authority, said, "State your business." Clearing my throat, I said, "I am Professor Vonne Meussling arriving to teach a night class in Interpersonal Communication." While waiting for the guard in the tower to verify my credentials which involved his looking at me through field glasses, I took closer inventory of the forbidding environment.

Surrounding the brick walls was a 15-foot, double circular barbed wire fence of concertina, razor-sharp wire topped by swirls of flesh-cutting blades. This hardward conveyed eloquently and wordlessly that, the stone fortress was escape proof. After I received approval to enter, I heard the unlocking of the barred gate and then I heard it locking behind me. As I continued walking through the metal detection device, and was being ushered through the long courtyard, I was aware of the intense silence broken only by a strange humming sound from a gadget designed to frighten off pigeons. After entering through two more sliding, barred, gates, I came into my initial contact with some of the inmates who were being frisked as they left the dining room. The ambient institutional scent, the inmates' focused stares as we passed, the total feeling of being locking in, made the meaning of incarceration inescapably real. Here, behind the high walls, with all the confidence I could find, I was going to begin my orientation class in Interpersonal Communication with twenty-six male maximum security criminals.

In the classroom, there were no smiles. The convict students appeared unreflective and purposeless. The only sounds were the clicking of doors being locked and the P.A. system announcing hourly routines. Anxious for a positive approach, I felt it was urgent to develope a non-evaluative atmosphere that would encourage each inmate to feel "ok."

From my lips I heard emerging these words: "When I teach Interpersonal Communication on campus in a free society, I ask students a question that I am <u>not</u> going to ask you. I say to them, 'All of you have broken the law at some time and some place, and so have I. If there are any of you who have not broken the law to date, please raise your hand.'" Of course very few hands are

ever raised. Often students will begin to disclose their illegal antics: taking a package of cigarettes, a candy bar, a notebook, or a car for a joy-ride. Most of them, obviously, were never apprehended.

I also mentioned to the prisoners other instances of illegal activities, cases involving people of social status whose crimes have cost them their positions. For example: A community pillar in Bluffton, Indiana, who worked for a bank for thirty years and had been lifting money during that time to finance an antique shop; a vice president of a bank in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, who used money that was not his to build a swimming pool; a bank president in Niles, Michigan, who had taken small amounts of cash "out of curiosity;" a Fort Wayne, Indiana, attorney who confiscated a portion of a client's estate. This device proved successful in breaking the ice and in bringing the inmates' attention to the fact that others have violated societal norms and are paying the price.

In the context of teaching within a prison, it is significant to note the effect of peer associates on the self-esteem of the individual inmate.

Barbour and Goldberg note that "The teacher of interpersonal communication has the opportunity to reach students where they 'live' and thereby to have considerable impact and lasting effect."[9] The authors also maintain that "The phenomena associated with interpersonal communication are those that are related to the perceptions that participants have of themselves, each other, and the interpersonal situation."[10]

Interpersonal perception and self-presentation seem to be peculiarly related: the way we feel we are perceived by others often causes us to present ourselves in that very way. We have, therefore, an inherent need to be around others who make us feel good about ourselves. Goffman indicates that we are

drawn like a magnet to interact, to become interpersonal with those who enhance our self-concept.

> The self . . . as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited.[11]

Many observers have noted and even experienced the fact that in certain situations we tend to be perceived, judged and evaluated more according to our success and failure than by our intrinsic characteristics. One of the student-inmates commented aptly on this point:

> The way we are treated when we enter prison exemplifies society's rejection. We are stripped of most of our personal belongings, given a number, examined, inspected, weighed, and documented. To us, these acts represent deprivation of our personal identities. Often we fear that we are losing our identification with our normal adult role.

This process of depersonalization in a maximum security prison serves as another effort to control. Each inmate becomes an anonymous member of a mass group.

According to Goffman, interpersonal communication with others is critical in situations in which we present many facets of ourselves to others and in turn receive their perception of us. Goffman says:

> . . . when an individual projects a definition of the situation and thereby makes an implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind, he automatically exerts a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of this kind have the right to expect. He also implicitly foregoes

> all claims to be things he does not appear to be and hence foregoes the treatment that would be appropriate for such individuals.[12]

Thus the prison experience will help to shape the individual's self-concept in a particular way and tend to bind him in a strong fashion with others sharing the prison experience.

In the words of another inmate:

> The prison environment is a cess pool of madness, corruption and denial all rolled up into one. And with it being a very carefully constructed one as oppossed to being natural makes it all the more devious. It's denial of self-privacy and the dehumanizing effects that it can have on so many, gives support to my fear of being destroyed in one way or another. Ther is no way it can avoid leaving a scar that can never be erased. I've seen lives taken, I've seen lives lost. I've seen identities shaken and manhoods destroyed. I am enslaved wherever I go, and I don't like it because I am a man! And it hurts me, because for as long as I am a part of it, whenever I look in the mirror I don't see a man I see an animal.

In his conclusion he strikes an interpersonal note.

> But in closing, my dear professor, having realized I've taken this farther than first anticipated, I'm sorry but it just came out.

Another prisoner says:

> I have seen many men, young and old who have killed themselves because they were not able to withstand that first traumatic shock of being "alone" in the midst of a thousand loss souls. Neither a lecturer or a book can dramatize the true alone and dismal feeling of defeat that entraps a man who first enters into a penal society.

The journal entries describing the inmates' desperate anger, fear and disturbed sense of themselves seemed to be therapeutic for my students.

An opportunity to ventilate their feelings seemed to be welcome.

The sexual theme, implicit in some of the journal entries and explicit in others is inescapable, and inside the prison walls, of course, sex is homosexual.

Bowker is cogent on one of the most sensational aspects of prison sex.

> The devaluation of the self is swift and severe in prison rapes. . . . This is magnified because of the social definition that is forced upon rape victims. This definition proclaims that they have become 'women' and can never again be men. Furthermore, their only value in the prison setting is in their 'womanhood.' Disparaging remarks will constantly be made about the newly minted 'punk' for the rest of his prison life, and may even be carried over to the streets when he is released.[13]

There was not a student in my class who did not allude to the intense fear of the loss of manhood. As one student comments:

> We are further threatened as persons and as sexual beings by the absence of heterosexual relationships, a deprivation that creates fears in most of us because of a loss of masculinity.

> We are very seriously threacened by the presence of other prisoners. Most of which are murderers, rapists, thieves, confidence men and homosexuals. . . . Many of us tend to feel that one of the worst aspects of prison life is being surrounded by other prisoners.

According to my students, youthful, first-time offenders are easy prey and become victims of aggressive rapes. As one student reflects:

> I am acutely sensitive to the low muffled cries in the wee hours of the morning when a lifer daringly crawls in the bed of some young frightened man who has never been confined before and his greatest crime is being . . . poor. I cry, too, because I share his pain and degradation.

Interpersonal communication ideally improves connectedness and relationships in the free society. However, in prison the individual is not only physically segregated but he also has lost emotional contact with his valued-others. Offenders in maximum security prisons frequently have been moved far from their families, who often cannot afford to visit them. If family members do visit, they are never alone with the inmate, and they can only touch at the beginning and end of the visit. This is a precaution to prevent smuggling into the prison.

Interpersonal Communication and Trust

The intense loneliness of an incarcerated individual can be known only to those who have experienced it. Interpersonal trust and trustworthy behavior is the ideal sought in the free society, but trust among the prison population tends to be minimal towards other inmates or institutional staff. Trust can lead, in fact, to physical or sexual abuse, material loss, and possibly death. Trust, of course, is an essential ingredient in any interpersonal relationship, but as one student commented, "I do not let them know my personal feelings or background in this place." The lack of a trusting relationship intensifies the loneliness. The plight of the lonely men was verbalized often in their journals. One student described those incarcerated as a forgotten society.

> I need someone I can confide in, someone I can disclose myself to. It's hard keeping these things inside of me day in and out. . . . There has to be someone that will listen with concern instead of trying to find a weakness.

Another writes concerning the void of relationships:

> It's a place where you learn that nobody needs you, that the outside world goes on without you. Prison is a place where you go for years without feeling the warm touch of a human hand; where you can go for months at a time without hearing a kind word.

The lack of a trusted other in one's life not only creates intense loneliness but provides endless hours for thinking.

> Prison is a place where you go to bed before you're tired, where you pull the blanket over your head when you're not cold. It's a place where you escape by reading, by playing cards, by dreaming, or simply going mad.

> Prison is a place where the flame in each man burns low. For some it goes out, but for most it flickers weak, sometimes flashes brightly, but it never seems to burn as bright as it once did. Prison is a place where you find grey hairs in your head, or you find your hair starting to disappear. It's a place where you get false teeth, stronger glasses, and aches and pains you never felt before. It's a place where you grow old and worry about it.

The inmates' writing reflects a need to place blame for their condition on the system because the pain of loneliness is so intense.

> If only they could witness loneliness making a young man old before his time and older and useless for the remainder of his life. If only they could feel these feelings of loneliness and despair.

> I've taken it upon myself to be the voice of many and disclose one most closed emotions because I myself hurt so very much. I bleed within from the wounds that this hell spit demon loneliness has inflicted on me.

> We don't rush totally for freedom, we all don't escape for freedom--we do these things to end this loneliness and if that doesn't work, some of us just admit defeat and . . . die. So you see loneliness too is a killer.

Another student-inmate comments:

> Prison is a place where you write letters and can't think of anything to say; where you gradually stop writing altogether. It's a place where hope springs eternal; where each parole board appearance means a chance to get out, even if the odds are hopelessly against you.

The feeling of loneliness is probably heightened because there is no sanctuary of safety. Alexander indicated that every morning that he walked out of his cell he had the fear that someone might stab him.[14] The ever present concern for personal safety in a prison is a reality. One of the correctional guards explained to me that the prisoners wanted to be locked in their cells at night for protection from other prisoners. This fear is deleterious to the health of the inmate. According to Bowker, prisoners living in dormitory settings often have high-blood-pressure problems because they are exposed continuously to the danger of assault and the stress of being forever on guard.[15] The prison society's "code of honor" does not ease the men's condition. One student explains:

> Telling on someone is looked on as one of the worst things you can do in prison. Interpersonal trust is low because one must be known as a person who doesn't talk, or rat, or snitch on others. This is very important because it could save your life. Becoming a snitch is hazardous to your health.

If the prison ambience of persistent danger discourages the more humane of the prisoner's impulses, it seems to encourage their opposite through the eternal hostility which pervades inside the walls. One of the students describes his way of coping:

> Because 'hate' is legislated here within the prison system, fed to us at each meal, as vitamins, shot into our blood

> stream on sick call as vaccine . . . I am acutely aware of my need to love. Out of necessity, I've learned to build my own 'fall-out' shelter as a haven when I need to escape.
>
> One morning while taking a census of the unit, an officer found the dead body of an inmate who had been sadistically stabbed over thirty times, lying in his own blood, still bleeding. The germ of fears can become a cancerous disease if we allow it to eat into our soul.
>
> Because the loneliness here has turned some lambs to hungry preditors and preditors to passive lambs. The lonelliness of incarceration hardens the soul of men, forcing him for survival sake to accept the butchery of mind, spirit and soul.

Correctional staff often contribute through malice, indifference or simple ignorance to the festering horror of the prisoner's life. Alexander wrote that, "Especially as a student, I had to deal with uneducated prison guards who seemed to be jealous that someone could commit a crime, get sent to prison and go to college because of their tax dollars."[16] The inmates comment about this problem:

> It's rather hectic at times to maintain a positive mental attitude being in an environment like this. Primarily because of the mental abuse that one must constantly contend with. However, I'm the sort of individual that refuses to allow this institution and its personnel to break my spirit.

Another adds:

> What seems so troublesome about the whole deal is that they seem to get pleasure from harressing the inmates in here. . . . All they have to do is fix the damned metal detectors around here and they would not have to do through all that they do to harrass us. I don't like no one touching my body anyway, but that's not the case here. It is a man touching me and I don't like it to damn much. The guards really get off on that type of thing because it gives them a sense of 'power' to shake someone down with their hands when they want to.

The language of the prisoners has helped to reify the negative aspects of the prison environment. The journals of the student inmates portray vividly the variety of their concerns--the sense of being dehumanized, the feeling of isolation, ranging from mere lack of someone to trust to outright fear of both guards and inmates, and the sheer pain of incarceration. There can be little doubt that exposure to the tormenting experiences of the prison tends to reduce the individual's capacity for normal interpersonal relations in a normal society. For the communication scholar the significance of all this may be summarized in this question: How can the teaching of interpersonal communication skills help the prisoner to return to normal society and enhance his chances for success there?

Perhaps one of the most simple and immediate contributions which the communication teacher can make is to provide a positive role model, to function as a "square from free society" whom the inmate might emulate and with whom he may perhaps come to identify. It appears that the presence of the communication instructor can serve as another way of helping the prisoner retain a healthful connection with the normal world by offering opportunity for self-disclosure in a nonthreatening, nonevaluative context. The journal entries of some of the inmates, who were very tense in the beginning of the classes, reflect the response to me as an instructor. Here are some of their comments:

> You're an easy person to respect and like, the very fact that you came inside this institution to teach is cause for me to respect and admire you regardless of your motives which I have no idea of.
>
> I felt very comfortable being around you. I felt I didn't have to feel one step under because of my situation, sorta have a few things in common with you. I instruct classes in the unit that I'm in S.A.U.G. Substance Abuse Unit--I teach a lot of behavioral therapy modalities within the

prison community.

> The thing that impressed me the most about your lecture was the fact that I can tell, through your conversation, that you aren't a "do as I say, and not as I do" you are just the opposite. It was the first time in a long time that I felt good about being around someone new.

Thus a small link with the outside world may help to instill in the prisoners a more positive, coping attitude. It may help them to come to terms with the problem of accountability. This conclusion is suggested by the following journal excerpts:

> Whatever choices I make in any given situation are something I must live with, and be accountable for. I savor the chances to bring harmony and balance into my life by making the choices. Whether they are right or wrong, at least I can continue to search for the correct solutions that make me satisfied, and also the people around me so that we can have an effective communication situation.
>
> We must try to "see" into our partner's field of experience so we can be effective when communicating. A lot of breakdowns can occur if we fail to do this.

As the prisoners became more conscious of the outside world through interaction with the communication teacher, they were made aware of the outside world and its value system. They seemed to manifest a more realistic attitude toward the larger world--an attitude that should enhance their likelihood of remaining in that world when released. Here were some of their attempts to come intellectually to grips with the prospects of freedom:

> I realize that my life chances are getting dimmer; my youth has flown by and I'll be 40 years old next year. I must be realistic about exactly what I'm going to do to make it when I get out. A 40 year old ex-con has to be very careful about everything.

> We keep mostly the very best memories of our past to show ourselves that we have had the best. We go on from day to day with this game and it makes us happy and helps us forget the sad things we have seen. This game is life, and life is a game of the mind and soul of a person trying to cope with his image of the better life for himself.

The fear of institutionalization seems to hover over another prisoner's questioning:

> What type of life do I plan on leading after I'm out of this place? Am I going to fit up to the expectation of my family, friends, society? I'm concerned about my life after I hit the streets, so much so I'm actually afraid sometimes of the possibly of incarceration again. I know I can't let my irrational fears prevent me from achieving my long term goals, but the fears are very real.

Another man sounds more positive:

> Going to school has enabled me to discipline myself in certain areas; it has enabled me to question myself . . . to see if its objective or subjective. Often times I question myself in search for answers to questions that I feel is relevant to my growth and development.

Another's comments would probably be gratifying to any communication instructor:

> I really enjoyed your class; it should have been mandatory that everyone in the prison attend, inmates and staff alike. As an inmate in this institution you are treated as sub-human, but its accepted and expected because this is the garbage can of the federal prison system.
>
> And that is the goal of my life, becoming a better person in my life, becoming a better person in my eyesight and others. And I will become.

As has been illustrated, the opportunity for the inmate to ventilate his feelings and frustrations seems to be gratifying to him. What is probably a form of restorative human intimacy is achieved through the journal device

as the following excerpts suggest.

> Warmth, to me, is love. You can't "fake" it, convincingly. I cry easily, because I feel with others, all the inhuman treatments that are experienced here, daily.

Another man writes:

> This is just the peeling of a rotten fruit, but its true. Anyway one thing led to another and no matter how much they punished me my problem wasn't being solved until now. That's why I am so interested in education because I need it to survive, to learn about myself and society. Also, I'll be in a better position to learn a skill and to apply rational decisions to solutions to my problems of every day activities.
>
> But I don't believe that I have ever had, given or received the affection or love that I wanted or looked for. It has been for me like standing outside and looking through a window.

Another major question for the communication researcher interested in the effect of the prison experience on individuals is how to keep the concepts of the normal world alive within an inmate who must survive in the prison environment with its peculiarly destructive value systems. The prisoners, limited as their perspective tends to be, were aware of the problem, as indicated by this statement:

> Men imitate one another in proportion as they are in close contact. For example: when we got here, the pattern for most of us was already laid out for us.

Another prisoner says:

> You have heard of murders, pickpockets, swindlers and thieves as individuals who had gone through a long period of apprenticeship, just as doctors, lawyers, farmers, or skilled

> workmen. It was that the accident of birth placed us in an atmosphere of crime. In addition to that most of the important acts of a social life are carried out under the domination of examples.

Ichheiser, addressing the problem in more general terms, notes that:

> . . . a person who is possessed by an individual paranoia is considered insane, the person who shares a collective paranois is considered to be normal within his group. It is the man rather who does not share the collective paranoia of his group, or of his culture . . . who is in danger of being considered, or even of really becoming insane.[17]

So the researcher needs to be aware that the pressures exerted by the collective prisoner population tends to shape the individual to the general mold. And there is some evidence of a positive feeling flowing from membership in a criminal fraternity. As one prisoner put it:

> Most of us would probably agree--that, living the life of a criminal has its benefits. Some of us have experienced things that would probably seem fictitious to the average person of society.

Along with the interest in counteracting there is also the issue of the negative interactions between the correctional staff and the prisoner. This particular aspect of prison experience certainly works against the prisoner's chances for successful reentry to society. Alexander, in a personal telephone interview, said that "a general distrust of guards could cause the inmate to have no respect for authority in general, even parental loving, or organizational control."[18] A student inmate emphasizes the same point:

> Most of us leave these institutions with a bitter taste for authority. Consequently we are vulnerable for further contact with the law.

Moreover, in the prison environment the inmates are under the most stringent surveilliance. They are monitored and accounted for each hour. They can move from place to place only at the direction of the voice on the P.A. system. They are allowed very little decision making. One student comments on how prisoners fear the autonomy of the outside world.

> Being constantly under observation and lacking the autonomy to make even the most insignificant decision, a lot of us come to think of ourselves as weak, dependent and helpless.

Another concern of predominant importance in the prisoner's life is the problem of sexual outlet. As the journal entries have demonstrated, sex is a most powerful influence and its expression can result in violence and physical and psychical damage. Bowker comments on the potentially long lasting effects of some kinds of prison sexual contacts.

> . . . the heterosexual life of prison rape victims may be damaged by their experiences. They may suffer from impotence and lack confidence in their dealings with women. If they have been "punks" over a long period of time and have never established a heterosexual pattern on the streets previous to their incarceration, they may find it easier to continue homosexual behavior after their release from prison than to attempt to switch to heterosexuality.[19]

The problem of enabling the inmate to remain whole enough to retain a reasonable hope of succeeding, once restored to normal society, is a major concern. Set opinions and stereotypes operate against the ex-prisoner's effort to rejoin society. One of the students summarizes this particularly annoying aspect of the penal experience:

> Then there are the people who try to make a go of it only to be stopped by a society that will not let him re-enter that society. Most people are afraid of the ex-con. They don't know what he is and mostly don't want to know. They will not open the job's for him so that he can make a honest living.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to identify some of the primary problems encountered in the teaching and application of interpersonal values within the walls of a maximum security prison for males. It has described how the existing practice of prison indoctrination dehumanizes inmates and diminishes their self-esteem by removing their personal belongings, attiring them in prison clothing and replacing their names with numbers. In addition to such prison practices which erode self-esteem, my experience has shown that the act of imprisonment itself deprives the individual of positive role models. I have explained that the nature of the collective prison psyche in a setting where physical and sexual abuses are a part of daily occurrences makes meaningful human relationships virtually impossible. The paper points out justified fear of being killed, the loss of contact with valued others and the risks involved in trusting either guards or fellow inmates, reduces prison life to an ongoing ordeal of intense loneliness. All of these aspects of the prison experience tend to minimize the individual's chances for successful reentry to normal society. The classroom which brought a nonevaluative nonhostile nook into a forbidding world was found to be therapeutic and restorative to the inmates who came for instruction. The confines of the interpersonal classroom, like a small society within a dreary subculture, enabled the inmate-students to develop a modicum of trust. The willingness of the prisoner to expose their innermost thoughts in the journal project and their consistence in attending class suggests that the classroom fulfilled not only an academic but an emotional need.

Notes

[1] A management classification system segregates prisoners and categorizes them according to sex, age, criminal record, the legal reasons for their incarceration and the correctional treatment necessary. Prisoners are housed in a maximum, medium, minimum and open security institutions accordingly. The policies of a maximum security prison is designed to provide escape proof surveillance; rigid control is the dominant concern and is placed above all other human considerations. See Harry E. Allen and Clifford E. Simonsen, Corrections in America: An Introduction (New York: Macmillan, 1981) pp. 171-179.

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[3] H.S. Becker, Outsiders (New York: Free Press, 1963), p. 38.

[4] Robert E. Park, "Human Nature, Attitudes and Mores," Social Attitudes, Kimball Young, ed. (New York: Holt, 1931), p. 94.

[5] Letter received from Sylvia McCollum, 26 January 1984.

[6] Roy R. Roberg and Vincent J. Webb, Critical Issues in Corrections: Problems, Trends, and Prospects (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1981), p. 25.

[7] D. Foge, " . . . We are the Living Proof . . . The Justice Model For Corrections (Cincinnati: W.H. Anderson, 1975), p. 117.

[8] C.R. Jeffery, "Criminology as an Interdisciplinary Behavioral Science," Criminology, 16 (1978), 149-170.

[9] Alton Barbour and Alvin A. Goldberg, Interpersonal Communication: Teaching Strategies and Resources (Urbana, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse, 1974), p. 5.

[10] Ibid., p. 6

[11] Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959), p. 252-253.

[12] Ibid., p. 13

[13] Lee H. Bowker, Prison Victimization (New York: Elsevier North Holland, 1980) pp. 16-17.

[14] Telephone interview with Kenneth Alexander, Ex-offender, Staff Assistant, University Hospital, 26 January 1984.

[15] Bowker, p. 30.

[16] Kenneth Alexander, "A Student's VIEW of College Behind Bars," Unpublished paper proposed for Speech Communication Association annual convention, November, 1984.

[17] Gustav Ichheiser, Appearances and Realities: Misunderstanding in Human Relations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970), p. 46

[18] Telephone interview, Alexander, 26 January 1984.

[19] Bowker, p. 17.